

APPROVED BY THE SBU UUP EBOARD 11/13/2019

UUP Stony Brook Statement on LGBTQ Workers Rights

In light of two cases heard on October 8 by the US Supreme Court regarding work-place discrimination and the right to terminate employment based on an individual's LGBTQ identity, we stand in solidarity with the plaintiffs who were wrongfully terminated. While deliberating on the interpretation of the words of Title VII of the 1964 Civil Rights Act that bar employment discrimination "because of sex" or "based on sex," we join organizations and activists around the world in standing against any effort to diminish our nation's civil rights protections. The 1964 Civil Rights Act established employment as an area under federal oversight because of the copious evidence that labor is at the heart of civic and political equality and should not be limited or denied because of social prejudice. While we as a society have made progress in our efforts to achieve equality, the LGBTQ community's struggle continues, and it is imperative that we act to protect those most vulnerable; those who perform their jobs in constant fear of termination unrelated to job performance. We recognize that less than half of states retain laws protecting LGBTQ individuals from discrimination. We also recognize that the current Trump administration submitted briefs on behalf of the discriminating employers and took part in arguments against the three workers, despite the fact that the case of the transgender worker, Aimee Stephens, was first brought by the EEOC, a US government federal agency. Ruling against the plaintiffs, two gay men and a trans woman, will set a new precedent in favor of employer prejudice and throw many workers into uncertainty. An attack on any individual's rights threatens all our rights. The right to feel safe in our workplace regardless of gender identity and/or sexual orientation is fundamental. This protection must be available to individuals who identify with or are seen as belonging to the LGBTQ community regardless of what state they live in or their employer's personal beliefs. This landmark ruling will affect millions of hard-working people in this country. The court has an opportunity to uphold and strengthen civil rights protections and we strongly encourage it to do so.